

ED29.2:Ev13

Basic Skills Improvement Policy



Implementation Guide #1

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EVALUATING BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT

Massachusetts  
Department of Education  
April, 1979

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Fred Andelman	Massachusetts Teachers Association	Boston
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Edward Reidy	Project Competency	Fitchburg
Virginia Yardumian	School Committee Member	Malden

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Appendix: "Development and Application of Criteria for Screening Commercial Standardized Tests for the Massachusetts Basic Skills Improvement Policy"

Attached\*

\* If these materials are not included here, check with your Superintendent. Each Superintendent received these materials.



This booklet is intended to assist districts with the assessment aspects of their Basic Skills Improvement Plans. As much as possible, steps and procedures are presented in a straightforward manner. This means that every possible situation is not explained in detail, and that specific references to some points in the Regulations for Implementation of the Basic Skills Improvement Policy have been omitted. The Regulations, of course, are the "final word" on requirements. Districts should refer to them in conjunction with this booklet for a complete understanding of the requirements of the Policy.

## INTRODUCTION

We've said it before, but it needs to be said again. This Policy is called the Basic Skills Improvement Policy. It is intended to focus on curriculum. Evaluation of student achievement of minimum standards is obviously necessary in order to know how students are doing and whether or not they have achieved minimum standards. However, this is not a "testing program". Assessment is one aspect of implementing this Policy; it is not the whole program. It is not even the biggest part of the program. This booklet focuses only on the assessment aspects of the Policy.

In 1980-81, students need to be evaluated for achievement of minimum standards in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Starting in 1981-82, students also need to be evaluated for achievement of minimum standards in Listening and Speaking.

School districts have different curricula, different organizational structures, different overall curriculum objectives, different areas of strength, and different needs. This Policy recognizes this diversity, and provides a great deal of flexibility to local districts in developing and implementing programs to improve achievement of basic skills.

At the ELEMENTARY levels, each district decides:

- . which grade levels to pick for assessment.
- . what the basic skills objectives are.
- . what evaluation instruments are appropriate.
- . the definition of achievement of minimum standards ("cut-off scores" on a test).

At the SECONDARY level, districts decide all of these things, with restrictions and requirements for approval by the state. Look at the chart on the next page for a summary.

ELEMENTARY LEVEL      SECONDARY LEVEL

Establishment of Minimum Standards

Determine objectives

Determine level of achievement  
("cut-off point")

Evaluation of Student Achievement

Selection of grade level

Selection of evaluation instruments

District	District (must include State objectives)
District	District
District (at least once during grades K-3 and 4-6)	District (first assessment must be by early in grade 9 - district may decide to start in grade 7 or 8 - annually after that until student achieves minimum standards)
District	District (State must approve)

# REGULATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

## BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT POLICY

(January, 1979)

### Sections on Evaluation

#### 40.03: Establishment of Minimum Standards

(1) Each public school district shall establish minimum standards in each of the basic skills for the following grade levels, if applicable: early elementary, later elementary and secondary. At the secondary level the minimum standards established by each public school district shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the basic skills objectives set forth in Section 40.04 of these regulations.

(a) By August 1, 1980, each public school district shall establish minimum standards in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

(b) By August 1, 1981, each public school district shall establish minimum standards in the basic skills of listening and speaking.

(2) Each public school district shall determine the specific grade or grades within the early elementary, later elementary and secondary levels for which minimum standards shall be established.

#### 40.05: Evaluation of Basic Skills Achievement

(1) Each public school district shall evaluate each student's achievement of minimum standards at least once during the early elementary, later elementary and secondary levels.

(a) Evaluation of student achievement of minimum standards in reading, writing and mathematics shall begin no later than the end of the 1980-81 school year.

(b) Evaluation of student achievement of minimum standards in listening and speaking shall begin no later than the end of the 1981-82 school year.

(2) Each public school district shall determine at which grade or grades at the early elementary, later elementary, and secondary levels students shall be evaluated for the achievement of minimum standards, provided that secondary level students shall first be evaluated no later than the beginning of grade nine.

(3) Once a public school district has determined at which secondary grade level to begin the evaluation of student achievement of minimum standards, it shall provide for an evaluation of student achievement of minimum standards at least once at each succeeding grade level until the student has achieved the minimum standards. A secondary level student who has achieved the minimum standards for a basic skill need not be evaluated again in that skill.



(4) At the early and later elementary levels, each public school district shall determine which evaluation instruments shall be used to evaluate student achievement of minimum standards.

(5) At the secondary level, each public school district shall have the option of using one or more of the following evaluation instruments to evaluate student achievement of minimum standards:

- (a) Evaluation instruments available from the Department of Education
- (b) Commercially available evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education; or
- (c) Locally utilized or developed evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education as being comparable to either (a) or (b).

(6) In accordance with Section 4.03 of the Chapter 622 Regulations Pertaining to Access to Equal Educational Opportunity as adopted by the Board of Education, a public school district shall not use an evaluation instrument which discriminates on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

(7) After an evaluation of a student's achievement of minimum standards, each public school district shall give the student and his or her parent the opportunity to review the evaluation instruments used and the complete record of the student's achievement level. The complete record of a student's achievement level shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the corrected responses of the student on the evaluation instruments used, and shall be maintained as part of the student's temporary record pursuant to the Student Records Regulations as adopted by the Board of Education.

40.10: Transfer Students, Students in Special Education Programs, and Students of Limited English Ability

(1) A public school district may exempt any student who transfers into its school district after having completed the tenth grade in another district from the annual reporting requirements of Section 40.09.

(2) The evaluation team responsible for developing a student's Individual Educational Plan in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 713 and the Chapter 766 Regulations shall determine whether a student in need of special education shall be evaluated for achievement of the minimum standards provided for by these regulations, in addition to the objectives contained in the Individual Educational Plan, and whether the result of such an evaluation shall be included in the public school district's annual report submitted pursuant to Section 40.09. The evaluation team's determination shall be included in the student's Individual Educational Plan.

(3) Each public school district shall exempt, from all provisions of these regulations, students who have limited English ability as defined by General Laws, Chapter 71A. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, students who have completed an appropriate transitional bilingual education program in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 71A and the Regulations for Use in Administering Programs in Transitional Bilingual Education adopted by the Board of Education shall be considered as any other students for the purpose of these regulations.

## EVALUATION OF BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

1. Each student must be assessed at least once during grades K-3 and grades 4-6 in each basic skill area (Reading, Writing, and Mathematics beginning in 1980-81; add Listening and Speaking beginning in 1981-82).
2. You must have the participation of parents, teachers, administrators, and the general public in setting minimum standards.
3. You pick the grade level for assessment of each skill area. (In other words, you might assess reading in grades 2 and 4, writing in grades 3 and 6, and mathematics in grades 3 and 5. Another example: you might assess reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3 and 5. These are just two possibilities. You decide what makes the most sense for your district.)
4. Before you can select an appropriate instrument, obviously you must know what you're trying to evaluate. So, you need to identify your basic skills objectives in each area.
5. You review existing evaluation instruments, including anything developed locally. Then, you select the instrument(s) you wish to use, or develop your own.
6. You determine the level of achievement ("cut-off point") for each basic skill area.
7. You report the number and percentage of students who have and have not achieved your minimum standards for each basic skill area.
8. Forms will be provided for reporting this information. The forms will be available in October, 1979.



# EVALUATION OF BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

## OPTION A: STATE TESTS

At the secondary level, each district has three options for evaluating student achievement of minimum standards.

### Section 40.05

- a) EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:
- b) Commercially available evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education; or
- c) Locally utilized or developed evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education as being comparable to either (a) or (b).

\* \* \*

The Department of Education has developed tests to assess student achievement of the secondary level basic skills objectives in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

These tests were administered to a statewide random sample of students in March and April, 1979, to get some baseline data about the performance of secondary level students. Results will be available in September, 1979.

A district may chose to use a state test for any or all of the basic skill areas.

Attached are copies of the state tests.\* With each test is a listing of the state basic skills objectives and the items on the test which were designed to measure each objective. This information is provided for several reasons:

1. To help clarify the objectives.
2. To allow districts, if you wish, to administer these tests prior to the approval of your Basic Skills Plan in order to conduct a needs assessment.
3. To allow districts to see what the state tests are like. You need to examine the test(s) to decide if you want to use one or more of them as part of your Basic Skills Improvement Program.

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\*If Copies of the state tests are not included here, check with your Superintendent. Each Superintendent received a copy of the tests.

Using these materials, you can review the state tests to answer such questions as:

- . Are the test items at the right level of difficulty for our students, or do we want to consider other tests that are more or less difficult?
- . For gross screening purposes, are we satisfied with the number of items for each objective, or do we want to consider other tests with more items per objective? (The state tests are not intended to be diagnostic tests.)
- . Are the state's objectives and test items too limiting for us? Should we consider other tests that include the state objectives but also have other objectives that correspond to our local basic skills objectives?

Based on a review such as this, a district can determine whether or not to select state tests as part of your Basic Skills Improvement Plan.

#### IF YOUR DISTRICT DECIDES TO USE A STATE TEST, HERE IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN...

For each state test that you decide to use (Reading, Writing, and/or Mathematics):

1. You will indicate in your Basic Skills Improvement Plan that you will use the state test.
2. You will receive three equivalent forms of the attached sample test. They will not be the same exact tests, but ones which have been constructed to have parallel content and to be equivalent to the sample test.
3. You will receive a specimen set which will include:
  - Three equivalent forms and answer keys
  - Technical manual
  - Directions for test administration
4. It will be the district's responsibility to have the test duplicated and scored. (This can be done locally, or by arrangement with commercial test publishers who will be offering these services to districts. You will need to make arrangements with them about costs, score information that will be provided, reporting format, etc.)
5. These tests may be administered at grades 7-12. Since they are designed as basic skills tests to assess achievement of the basic skills objectives, they are appropriate for use at any secondary grade level.



6. For the Writing Test, your district will have to provide assurances that:

- . All students doing the writing sample will have the opportunity to use a dictionary while writing.
- . The scoring procedures (using holistic or analytical scoring) assess student performance of the state writing objectives.
- . The scoring procedures insure reliability of results (such as, by training readers, having two independent ratings on holistically scored papers).

A specific time limit is not required. You may give students the opportunity to revise their work before it is evaluated.

7. If you use a state test, your district will still set its own level of achievement (cut-off score) for passing the test.



## EVALUATION OF BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

OPTION B: COMMERCIAL TESTS

At the secondary level, each public school district shall have the option of using one or more of the following evaluation instruments to evaluate student achievement of minimum standards.

## Section 40.05(5)

- a) Evaluation instruments available from the Department of Education;
- b) COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; or
- c) Locally utilized or developed evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education as being comparable to either (a) or (b).

\*

\*

\*

SUMMARY REPORT - REVIEW OF COMMERCIAL TESTS

*This summarizes information from the attached report of the Public Affairs Research Institute.\* That report contains a detailed description of the process and findings of the first screening that was conducted. It also contains copies of all forms and lists of criteria used to rate tests.*

Fourteen test batteries were reviewed for technical characteristics, potential bias, and content. Tests reviewed initially were chosen solely because they are commonly used in Massachusetts secondary schools. Other tests will be reviewed when submitted as part of Basic Skills Plans, and, if approved, will be added to an updated Approved List. The April Approved List is just a starting point; it will be periodically updated. JUST BECAUSE A TEST IS NOT ON THE LIST DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT WON'T BE APPROVED. We may not have reviewed it yet; or, additional information may be required before it can be approved. If you want to use a commercial test that is not on the Approved List, go over the Criteria for Approval of Commercial Tests. You should be able to figure out if your test will meet these criteria and be approved.

Requirement 1: Technical Review

A score of 80 percent or better is required for a test to be approved on technical grounds. For some tests reviewed, missing information accounted for scores below this point. With additional technical information, some of these tests will probably be approved technically and added to the Approved List.

\*If the PARI Report is not included with these materials, check with your Superintendent. Each Superintendent received a copy of the Report.



## Requirement 2: Bias Review

All tests are subject to an independent Bias Review conducted by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity of the Massachusetts Department of Education. In order for a test to be approved, it must pass the BEE0 Bias Review.

## Requirement 3: Content Review

Reviewers gave a rating to each test on the readability level. In cases where reviewers determined that the readability level was too difficult for the lowest grade level covered by the test, districts should consider whether the reading level of the test is appropriate for the students in their districts who will take that particular test.

Reviewers also matched test items to the state secondary level basic skills objectives. In reviewing Reading, Vocabulary, and Mathematics tests, we found that a limited percentage of the objectives were covered by the tests. Requiring complete coverage of all objectives would have resulted in virtually eliminating one of the options (option B) given to districts in the Regulations. So, a compromise was reached. Until September 1, 1983 a test does not have to measure all of the state objectives in order to receive approval. But, for secondary students who will be assessed for the first time in 1983-84, all evaluation instruments used will have to cover all secondary level basic skills objectives in the Regulations.

Districts still need to review the test they wish to use and match items to the state objectives. You will have to submit information describing the review and what you find. However, districts are permitted to use commercial tests with a limited matching until 1983-84. This gives publishers time to develop instruments which assess all of the Massachusetts objectives, and gives districts a viable option in the meantime.

### A COMMERCIAL TEST WILL BE APPROVED FOR USE IF:

1. it receives a score of at least 80 percent on the technical review; and
2. it passes a Bias Review conducted by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity.

### IF YOUR DISTRICT WANTS TO USE A COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE EVALUATION INSTRUMENT THAT IS ON THE "APPROVED LIST " HERE IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN...

#### For Reading and Mathematics:

1. You will indicate in your Basic Skills Improvement Plan that you wish to use a specific commercially available evaluation instrument, and that this test has already been approved by the Department.
2. When you submit your Basic Skills Plan, you will also submit an analysis showing the content match between items on the test and the state objectives, and assurances that the reading level is suitable for students in the lowest grade to be evaluated.



NOTE: At this time, a district may use an instrument even if all of the state objectives are not assessed. However, all state objectives will have to be assessed by any instrument used (for the initial assessment at the secondary level) starting in 1983-84. In other words, if you have a commercial test which you are already using, but which does not assess all of the state objectives, you may continue to use it until September 1, 1983, as long as it meets the other requirements for approval. By September 1, 1983, however, your instrument(s) must assess all of the state objectives.

3. You will not have to submit copies of the instrument(s) or technical information, since, if the test has been reviewed and approved, we already have all the necessary information.
4. Forms, available in October, 1979, will be provided for submitting information noted above.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT POLICY

APPROVED COMMERCIAL TESTS FOR READING AND MATHEMATICS

List #1 - April 1979

The Policy on Basic Skills Improvement provides to local school districts three options for testing secondary level students (see section 40:05 (5) of Regulations). The tests, listed below, have been approved for use in assessing the basic skills of reading and mathematics. None of the tests reviewed were constructed or intended for specific use in the Implementation of the Basic Skills Improvement Policy. Judgements made about these tests should in no way be interpreted to reflect on the suitability of the tests in terms of their originally intended use.

TEST	PUBLISHER	COPYRIGHT	LEVEL	FORM	SUBTEST
Basic Skills Assessment	Addison-Wesley/ETS	1977		ZBX4 (A)	Read & Math
California Achievement Test	CTB/McGraw Hill	1977	17, 18, 19	C, D	Read & Math
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills	CTB/McGraw Hill	1973	3, 4	S, T	Read & Math
Iowa Test of Basic Skills	Houghton-Mifflin	1978	13, 14	7, 8	Read, Vocab, Math
Metropolitan Achievement Test	Psychological Corp	1978	Advanced 1	JS, KS	Math
Metropolitan Achievement Test	Psychological Corp	1978	Advanced 2	JS, KS	Read & Math
Stanford Achievement	Psychological Corp	1972	Advanced	A, B	Read & Math
Stanford Diagnostic Reading	Psychological Corp	1976	Brown	A, B	Read
Sequential Test of Educational Progress (STEP)	Addison-Wesley/ETS	1979	I, IJ	X, Y	Read & Math

Districts may use any of these tests until the end of the 1982-83 school year. As of September 1, 1983 all evaluation instruments must include items which evaluate all of the state objectives in reading and mathematics.

The list of approved tests shall be updated periodically as other new instruments are approved. Each new list shall be sent to all school systems.

### For Writing:

The Department of Education grants approval for public school districts to select any commercially available instrument which assesses student writing by means of a writing sample as long as assurances are provided that:

1. All students doing the writing sample will have the opportunity to use a dictionary while writing.
2. For the writing item(s) selected:
  - . Each item is clear and concise.
  - . The directions are specific.
  - . The topic allows for a range of responses.  
The content should not limit the ability of an average student to write an acceptable response.
  - . The vocabulary is not too difficult to be understood by an average student.
  - . Each item indicates the way the student should proceed (give your reasons, cite specific examples, etc.).
  - . Each item is within the range of experience of all students. (The content should not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage to any group of students.)
  - . Each item is free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping.
3. The scoring procedures (using holistic or analytical scoring) assess student performance on the state writing objectives.
4. The scoring procedures insure reliability of results (such as, by training readers, having two independent ratings on holistically scored papers).

The stimulus for a student writing sample need not be limited to a written question or questions. A visual stimulus, such as a photograph, may be used, as long as the school district can provide the required assurances.

A specific time limit is not required. You may give students the opportunity to revise their work before it is evaluated.



IF YOUR DISTRICT WANTS TO USE A COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE EVALUATION INSTRUMENT THAT HAS NOT BEEN APPROVED BY THE STATE YET, HERE IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN...

For Reading and Mathematics:

1. You will indicate in your Basic Skills Improvement Plan that you wish to use a specific commercially available evaluation instrument (or instruments).
2. When you submit your Basic Skills Plan, you will also submit a copy of the test; an analysis showing the content match between items on the test and the state objectives; assurances that the reading level is suitable for students in the lowest grade to be evaluated; and supporting technical information (see next page).

NOTE: *At this time, a district may use an instrument even if all of the state objectives are not assessed. However, all state objectives will have to be assessed by any instrument used (for the initial assessment at the secondary level) starting in 1983-84. In other words, if you have a commercial test which you are already using, but which does not assess all of the state objectives, you may continue to use it until September 1, 1983, as long as it meets the other requirements for approval. By September 1, 1983, however, your instrument(s) must assess all of the state objectives.*

3. In order for your test to be approved, it must:
  - . receive a score of at least 80 percent on the Technical Review; and
  - . pass a Bias Review conducted by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity.
4. The technical criteria, and the points awarded for each item, are given on the "Standardized Achievement Test Review Form" which follows.
5. If your evaluation instrument is approved, you will be notified along with approval of your Basic Skills Plan.
6. If your evaluation instrument is not approved, you will be told why. If you can provide additional information, you can resubmit your plan for approval. (See Section 40.08, Paragraph 5 of the Regulations.)

For Writing:

The Department of Education grants approval for public school districts to select any commercially available instrument which assesses student writing by means of a writing sample as long as assurances are provided that:

1. All students doing the writing sample will have the opportunity to use a dictionary while writing.
2. For the writing item(s) selected:
  - . Each item is clear and concise.
  - . The directions are specific.
  - . The topic allows for a range of responses. The content should not limit the ability of an average student to write an acceptable response.



- . The vocabulary is not too difficult to be understood by an average student.
  - . Each item indicates the way the student should proceed (give your reasons, cite specific examples, etc.).
  - . Each item is within the range of experience of all students. (The content should not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage to any group of students.)
  - . Each item is free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping.
3. The scoring procedures (using holistic or analytical scoring) assess student performance on the state writing objectives.
  4. The scoring procedures insure reliability of results (such as, by training readers, having two independent ratings on holistically scored papers).

The stimulus for a student writing sample need not be limited to a written question or questions. A visual stimulus, such as a photograph, could may be used, as long as the school district can provide the required assurances.

A specific time limit is not required. You may give students the opportunity to revise their work before it is evaluated.

## STANDARDIZED ACHIEVEMENT TEST REVIEW FORM

### Technical Considerations

*This review form was prepared by Ron Hambleton, George Madaus and Peter Airasian to meet specifications required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for use in conjunction with the Massachusetts Basic Skills Improvement Policy. This form summarizes information from several forms in the appended report, "Development and Application of Criteria for Screening Commercial Standardized Tests for the Massachusetts Basic Skills Improvement Policy". You should refer to that report for more detailed information, descriptions, and directions.*

1. How many alternate forms of this test are available?(no points)        No. of forms
2. Is there a Technical Manual which includes information about the test regarding the following ten topics: (1 point each)
 

a. Item Review Methods . . . . .	YES	NO
b. Item Analysis . . . . .	YES	NO
c. Average Item Difficulty . . . . .	YES	NO
d. Internal Consistency Reliability . . . . .	YES	NO
e. Test/Retest Reliability . . . . .	YES	NO
f. Parallel Form Reliability . . . . .	YES	NO
g. Standard Error of Measurement . . . . .	YES	NO

h. Content Validity . . . . .	YES	NO	
i. Norms . . . . .	YES	NO	
j. Procedures for screening items for offensive sexual, cultural, racial, and/or ethnic content, and/or stereotyping . . . . .	YES	NO	
3. How many of the items reviewed meet the standard rules of item writing? (up to 5 points) (See page 21.)	<u>          </u> % of acceptable items		
4. Were item analysis results used to identify "defective" test items? (up to 3 points)	YES	NO	INA*
5. Are data bearing on the consistency of mastery decisions (for one or more performance standards or cut-off scores) reported in the Technical Manual? (1 point)	YES	NO	
6. Is the consistency of mastery decisions (for one or more cut-off scores) reported in the Technical Manual equal to or above 90%? (5 points)**	YES	NO	INA
7. Do standard indices of internal consistency reliability reported on the <u>total reading score or total mathematics score</u> reach or exceed .90? (up to 5 points)	YES	NO	INA
8. Do standard indices of test-retest or parallel form reliability as reported on the <u>total reading score or total mathematics score</u> reach or exceed .90? (up to 5 points)	YES	NO	INA
9. If parallel-forms of the Test are available, do both forms (or multiple-forms, if available) measure equally well the content spanned by the skills included in the Test? (In other words, do the multiple-forms of the Test have equivalent content validity?) (no points)	YES	NO	INA
10. Are the test score norms based on data that is no more than five years old? (2 points)	YES	NO	INA
11. Were the norm groups of sufficient size (i.e. at least 300 students)? (2 points)	YES	NO	INA
12. Were the samples of students used in the norming study representative of students in the grades for which this test is intended? (3 points)	YES	NO	INA
13. Were the samples of students used in the norming study representative of important strata within the society (i.e., rural pupils, minority group pupils, pupils in large city schools, etc.) (3 points)	YES	NO	INA

\*INA - Information not available

\*\*Currently not included in tabulation of total points of which percentage is calculated

- |     |  |     |    |
|-----|--|-----|----|
| 14. | Are the test administration directions suitable for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?<br>(2 points)        | YES | NO |
| 15. | Do the test administration directions address the matter of time limits? (2 points)  | YES | NO |
| 16. | Do the test administration directions indicate to the student how to handle the problem of guessing? (2 points)            | YES | NO |
| 17. | Is the layout or format of the test booklet convenient for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?<br>(2 points) | YES | NO |
| 18. | Is the layout or format of the answer sheet convenient for students in the lowest grade covered by the test?<br>(2 points) | YES | NO |
| 19. | Does the test include practice questions? (2 points)   | YES | NO |





## EVALUATION OF BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

OPTION C: LOCAL TESTS

At the secondary level, each district has three options for evaluating student achievement of minimum standards.

Section 40.05

- (a) Evaluation instruments available from the Department of Education;
- (b) Commercially available evaluation instruments approved by the Department of Education; or
- (c) LOCALLY UTILIZED OR DEVELOPED EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS BEING COMPARABLE TO EITHER (a) OR (b)      \*                      \*                      \*

IF YOUR DISTRICT WANTS TO USE A LOCALLY-DEVELOPED EVALUATION INSTRUMENT, HERE IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN...

1. You will indicate in your Basic Skills Improvement Plan that you wish to use a locally developed evaluation instrument (or instruments).
2. For each instrument, you will submit a copy of the evaluation instrument; supporting technical information; and an analysis showing the content match between the instrument and the state objectives.
3. Forms will be provided for this. They will be available in October, 1979.
4. The Department of Education will examine the materials you submit and consider your evaluation instrument(s) for approval.
5. The Department will review your instrument(s) following a procedure similar to the procedure used for commercial tests. The review will be based on the criteria which follow.
6. If your evaluation instrument is approved, you will be notified along with approval of your Basic Skills Plan.
7. If your evaluation instrument is not approved, you will be told why. If you can provide additional information, you can resubmit your plan for approval. (See Section 40.08, Paragraph 5 of the Regulations.)

## CONTENT CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING LOCAL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

1. Evidence that the district has examined its instrument(s) and matched items to the state basic skills objectives.

*NOTE: A locally developed evaluation instrument currently in use or developed prior to September 1, 1979 may be used until September 1, 1983, even if all of the state objectives are not assessed by the instrument (as long as it meets the Technical and Bias Review Criteria for approval).*

*Any locally developed evaluation instrument developed after September 1, 1979 will have to assess all of the state objectives beginning with the first year of assessment, and meet the Technical and Bias Review Criteria for approval by the Department of Education.*

2. Assurances that the reading level of the instrument is suitable for students in the lowest grade to be evaluated.
3. The extent to which the instrument is free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping. (All instruments are subject to approval by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity of the Massachusetts Department of Education.)

## TECHNICAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING LOCAL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

1. Have you provided satisfactory information about these topics?
  - . methods of developing, testing, and reviewing items
  - . methods of analyzing test item results
  - . methods of determining item difficulty/discrimination
  - . methods of determining test reliability
  - . methods of determining parallel form reliability
  - . determination of standard error of measurement
  - . methods of screening items for offensive sexual, racial, cultural, and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping
2. Were item analysis results used to identify defective test items?
3. Do test items meet standard rules of item writing?  
(See page 21.)
4. Are data bearing on the consistency of mastery decisions across forms (for one or more cut-off scores determined by the district) reported? Is the consistency at least 90 %?
5. Are parallel forms available? Do they have equivalent content validity?
6. Is reported reliability at least 90%?
7. Are the test administration directions suitable for students in the lowest grade who will be evaluated? Do they address the matter of time limits? Do they indicate to students what to do about guessing?



8. Is the layout of the test booklet and answer sheet convenient for students in the lowest grade who will be evaluated?
9. Does the instrument include practice questions?

#### CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITING TESTS

The Department of Education grants approval for public school districts to use any locally developed instrument which assesses student writing by means of a writing sample as long as assurances are provided that:

1. All students doing the writing sample will have the opportunity to use a dictionary while writing.
2. For the writing item(s) selected:
  - . Each item is clear and concise.
  - . The directions are specific.
  - . The topic allows for a range of responses. The content should not limit the ability of an average student to write an acceptable response.
  - . The vocabulary is not too difficult to be understood by an average student.
  - . Each item indicates the way the student should proceed (give your reasons, cite specific examples, etc.).
  - . Each item is within the range of experience of all students. (The content should not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage to any group of students.)
  - . Each item is free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping.
3. The scoring procedures (using holistic or analytical scoring) assess student performance on the state writing objectives.
4. The scoring procedures insure reliability of results (such as, by training readers, having two independent ratings on holistically scored papers).

The stimulus for a student writing sample need not be limited to a written question or questions. A visual stimulus, such as a photograph, may be used, as long as the school district can provide the required assurances.

A specific time limit is not required. You may give students the opportunity to revise their work before it is evaluated.



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### Multiple-Choice Item Writing Principles

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1. Is the item stem clearly written for the intended group of students?
2. Is the item stem free of irrelevant material?
3. Is a single problem clearly defined in the item stem?
4. Are the answer choices clearly written for the intended group of students?
5. Are the answer choices free of irrelevant material?
6. Is there a correct answer or a clearly best answer?
7. Have words like "always," "none," or "all" been removed?
8. Are likely student mistakes used to prepare incorrect answers?
9. Is "all of the above" avoided as an answer choice?
10. Are the answer choices arranged in a logical sequence (if one exists)?
11. Was the correct answer randomly positioned among the available answer choices?
12. Are all repetitious words or expressions removed from the answer choices and included in the item stem?
13. Are all of the answer choices of approximately the same length?
14. Do the item stem and answer choices follow standard rules of punctuation and grammar?
15. Are all negatives underlined?
16. Are grammatical cues between the item stem and the answer choices, which might give the correct answer away, removed?
17. Are letters used in front of the possible answer choices to identify them?
18. Have expressions like "which of the following is not" been avoided?

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

The criteria described in the previous pages apply specifically to the evaluation of standardized, multiple choice tests (with the exception of criteria for evaluating writing by means of a writing sample). This focus exists because that's the direction many districts are likely to take in assessing student achievement.

However, some school districts may be considering alternative measures of student achievement (e.g. performance criteria). This is a difficult task to accomplish successfully. However, the Policy does allow for this type of assessment. Similar technical requirements will have to be met, and the evaluation approach will be subject to approval by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity.

Districts considering alternative approaches to assessment are encouraged to discuss their plans with members of the Bureau of Research and Assessment.



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Department of Education

31 St. James Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02116

March 29, 1979

### M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Bureau of Research and Assessment

FROM: Charles Glenn, Director  
Marlene Godfrey, Project Director for Chapter 622  
Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity

RE: Bias Review of Commercial Tests for the Basic Skills  
Improvement Policy

Pursuant to Federal legislation (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 86.36b and Section 86.36c) and State legislation (Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971, Section 2.04, Section 4.03 and Section 8.01):

The Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity undertook an independent review for bias of commercial tests being considered for approval under the Commonwealth's Basic Skills Improvement Policy. The review team, which was composed of the Chapter 622 team, reviewed only those sections of the test being considered for use in conjunction with the Policy.

The review was conducted on the content of the test instruments - that is, the test items themselves. For purposes of the Basic Skills Improvement Policy, questions of the appropriateness of the norming population were not considered. This review and any test approval arising from it, therefore, apply only to the acceptability of the items and overall content. The assumption behind this review is that scores will be reported in terms of the percentage of items a student answers correctly. Since the appropriateness of the norming population was not evaluated, approval does not include use of normed scores (such as grade equivalent scores). This is not to suggest blanket disapproval, but merely to state that this issue was not taken into consideration for purposes of this particular review.

The instruments were reviewed for overall bias, and special attention was given to identification of any items which might be offensive to any group.

The attached materials provide further information on the bias review:

Appendix A:	Federal and State Legislation
Appendix B:	Guidelines Used in the Review



Following tests are accepted by the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity as being satisfactorily free of offensive sexual, cultural, racial, and/or ethnic content and/or stereotyping. As long as these tests meet whatever other criteria may be established by the Department of Education for approval, BEEOP approves these tests for use in evaluating secondary level students pursuant to the Policy on Basic Skills Improvement:

Basic Skills Assessment Program (Reading and Math), 1977  
 California Achievement Tests (Reading and Mathematics; Levels 17, 18, 19), 1977  
 Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Reading and Mathematics, Levels 3 and 4) 1973  
 Cooperative Mathematics Test (Arithmetic), 1962  
 Gates MacGinitie (Reading and Vocabulary; Levels E and F), 1978  
 Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Reading, Vocabulary, and Mathematics; Levels 13 and 14), 1978  
 Iowa Test of Educational Development (Mathematics), 1972  
 Metropolitan Achievement Test (Reading and Mathematics; Advanced 1 and Advanced 2), 1978  
 SRA Achievement Series (Reading and Mathematics; Levels F, G, H), 1978  
 Stanford Achievement Test (Reading and Mathematics), 1972  
 Stanford Diagnostic Reading (Reading Comprehension, Brown Level), 1976  
 Stanford Test of Academic Skills - TASK (Reading and Mathematics; Levels 1A and 11A), 1972  
 STEP: Sequential Test of Educational Progress (Reading and Math Concepts, Level I/Math Computation, Level 1J), 1979

It should be noted that none of these instruments were designed specifically for the Basic Skills Policy of the Commonwealth, but were drawn up to meet more general objectives. In many cases, only one or two sub-tests from a test battery were considered, as only the objectives of the Basic Skills Policy in Reading and Mathematics were of concern. IN NO WAY SHOULD THE COMMENTS OF THE REVIEW TEAM BE CONSIDERED AS AN EVALUATION OF THE TOTAL INSTRUMENT FOR USE OUTSIDE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BASIC SKILLS IMPROVEMENT POLICY.

Instruments may or may not have additional sections which reflect the same degree of bias, or non-bias, as the sections reviewed. The norming data may also create additional concerns, especially for systems which intend to use the publishers' norms for purposes other than for Basic Skills Improvement Programs. Under state and federal regulations, school systems are responsible for their own review of any instrument they intend to use to ensure that it is not biased (see Appendix A).

APPENDIX A: Federal and State Legislation

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972:

Section 86.36b

...testing or other materials for appraising or counseling students shall not use different materials for students on the basis of their sex or use materials which permit or require different treatment of students on such basis unless

...the use of such different materials is shown to be essential to eliminate sex bias. Where the use of a counseling test or other instrument results in a substantially disproportionate number of members of one sex in any particular course of study classification, the recipient shall take such action as is necessary to assure itself that such disproportion is not the result of discrimination in the instrument or its application.

Section 86.36c

Disproportion in classes. Where a recipient finds that a particular class contains a substantially disproportionate number of individuals of one sex, the recipient shall take such action as is necessary to assure itself that such disproportion is not the result of discrimination on the basis of sex in counseling or appraisal materials or by counselors.

Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971:

Section 2.04

Any standards used as part of the admissions process, including but not limited to testing, the use of recommendations and interviewing, to any public school shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin. Limited English-speaking ability (as defined by Chapter 71A of the General Laws) shall not be used as a deterrent to or limitation on admissions.

Section 4.03

No materials or tests shall be employed for guidance purposes which discriminate and/or limit choices on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Section 3.01

The school committee of each school district shall establish policies, promote regulations and procedures, and implement monitoring and evaluation practices that support and promote affirmative action and stimulate necessary changes to insure that all obstacles to equal access to school programs for all persons regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, religion or limited English - speaking ability, no matter how subtle or unintended, are removed.

BIAS REVIEW CRITERIA  
FOR  
COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE AND  
LOCALLY DEVELOPED TESTS

All evaluation instruments will be reviewed for bias on the basis of these criteria. In reviewing instruments, overall patterns of bias and blatantly offensive content are to be avoided. (All items listed below may not apply in every case.)

#### I. CHECKLIST FOR RELEVANCY EVALUATION

- |  |     |    |     |
|--|-----|----|-----|
| A. Does the material accurately reflect the students' language experiences?  | YES | NO | NA* |
| B. Does the material reflect the students' own experiences?  | YES | NO | NA  |
| C. Does the material reflect the different levels (formal, deep, situational, etc.) of the students' culture?  | YES | NO | NA  |
| D. Does the material affirm the worth of the group members as individuals?   | YES | NO | NA  |
| E. Does the material reflect the students' culture as vital and dynamic: one in which an individual can grow, be nourished and enriched as a unique human being? | YES | NO | NA  |

#### CHECKLIST FOR AUTHENTICITY EVALUATION

- |  |     |    |    |
|--|-----|----|----|
| A. Is the material considered authentic by students or other members of the cultural group depicted?                               | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Is comparison of cultures seen in a positive light? (i.e. does not in any way imply the inferiority of one culture to another.) | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Does the material reflect authentic cultural values?  | YES | NO | NA |

#### II. CHECKLIST FOR LANGUAGE EVALUATION

- |  |     |    |    |
|--|-----|----|----|
| A. Is the language used familiar to the student?   | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Is the material's use of dialects accurate? Are dialects used without confusing them with one another?              | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Is the usage of dialects viewed as an acceptable way of communication? (Not used in a derogatory or demeaning way.) | YES | NO | NA |

#### III. CHECKLIST FOR CULTURAL EVALUATION

##### A. BIAS

- |   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| A. Are different cultures portrayed without an obvious tendency to debase one culture as opposed to another?              | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Are demeaning adjectives avoided in describing one culture as opposed to another? (Primitive, backward, ancient, etc.) | YES | NO | NA |

\* Not applicable



C.	Are cultural group members shown in a variety of types of behavior?	YES	NO	NA
D.	Is the group's material culture represented in ways that avoid emphasizing stereotyped categorizations of the group?	YES	NO	NA
E.	Are group members presented to avoid being perceived as homogeneous and interchangeable (save for sex and age differences)?	YES	NO	NA
F.	Are group members shown as possessing a variety of "cultural" traits of character or belief?	YES	NO	NA
G.	Are cultural views, attitudes, and values shown as things taught, challenged, tested, and sometimes discarded, rather than as "just naturally" shared and accepted by all the group members?	YES	NO	NA
H.	Are the cultural group's relations with other groups explained as responses to need, threat, competition, etc., instead of dictated by some inherent cultural attitude (such as "hostile", "warlike", etc.)	YES	NO	NA

#### 4.2 Content Relevance

A.	Does the material reflect the variety of attitudes, styles, and roles within the culture?	YES	NO	NA
B.	Does the material recognize both differences and similarities between cultures?	YES	NO	NA
C.	Does it reflect the cultural ideals, values and goals as well as the material and institutional constructs?	YES	NO	NA
D.	Is the group's intellectual and artistic expression represented by its members achievements in forms shared by other groups as well as those unique to itself?	YES	NO	NA
E.	Are the group's cultural traits (whether material, artistic or attitudinal) explained as having evolved through interaction with the environment or with other cultural groups?	YES	NO	NA
F.	Does the material emphasize the worth of cultural difference as well as similarity?	YES	NO	NA
G.	Is the material accurate in its descriptions and explanations of cultural traits, values, behavior? (Mexicans do <u>not</u> celebrate their Independence Day on the Cinco de Mayo.)	YES	NO	NA
H.	If the <u>fact</u> of a particular culturally and linguistically distinct group's existence within United States society adequately presented? (Native Americans in New York City and Puerto Ricans in New Mexico, for example, are rarely noticed.)	YES	NO	NA

## 5. CHECKLIST FOR POLITICAL BIAS

- |   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| A. Does the material present an accurate and objective account of the conflicts between the United States and other nations?                    | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Does the material present an accurate and objective account of the aims, needs and conditions of political protest within the United States? | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Does the material present an accurate account of the history of the democratic form of government?   | YES | NO | NA |

## 6. CHECKLIST FOR RACIAL BIAS

6.1 Bias

- |   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| A. Does the material avoid debasing one race as opposed to another?   | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Are consistent portrayals of subservient relationships between racial groups avoided?  | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Are persons of all races shown as members of a variety of social, religious or political groups and economic classes?  | YES | NO | NA |
| D. Are members of one race not depicted as experiencing a narrower range of feelings and emotions than members of another race?   | YES | NO | NA |
| E. Are all members of a racial group not presented as sharing in "typical" attitudes or feelings?   | YES | NO | NA |
| F. Are color labels which are used to indicate value ("black" for evil; "white" for pure, etc.) avoided?  | YES | NO | NA |
| G. Are members of a racial group not stereotyped as to manner of speech, style of dress, preferred diversions, etc.?  | YES | NO | NA |
| H. Are inter-racial contacts not pictured consistently as dangerous or hostile?   | YES | NO | NA |
| I. Are persons of one race not presented as having inherent abilities which are denied to persons of other racial groups (non-whites better suited to brutal labor than whites; non-whites more "in tune with nature", etc.)? | YES | NO | NA |

6.2 Content Relevance

- |  |     |    |    |
|--|-----|----|----|
| A. Does the material reflect the racial diversity of United States society?  | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Is an adequate and objective account of racial discrimination presented?  | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Is an adequate account of cultural, historical and social contributions of <u>all</u> racial groups in United States society presented? | YES | NO | NA |

- |    |  |     |    |    |
|----|--|-----|----|----|
| D. | Does the material reinforce the value of interethnic contact?                              | YES | NO | NA |
| E. | Are members of all racial groups presented as equally complex and worthwhile human beings? | YES | NO | NA |
| F. | Is the diversity of individual experience within a racial group adequately represented?    | YES | NO | NA |

## 7. CHECKLIST FOR HISTORICAL BIAS

### 7.1 Bias

- |    |   |     |    |    |
|----|---|-----|----|----|
| A. | Does the material avoid suppressing or distorting the presence, contribution and point of view of culturally distinct groups to the United States history?  | YES | NO | NA |
| B. | Are known historical factors not suppressed in order to make the actions of some group or person seem good or bad?  | YES | NO | NA |
| C. | Are different peoples and cultural groups presented as people struggling to satisfy their own needs and defend their own values rather than as obstacles in the path of another civilization?   | YES | NO | NA |
| D. | Is the North American continent not depicted as essentially unsettled until the advent of white Europeans?  | YES | NO | NA |
| E. | Does the material not ignore the cost to certain groups of United States historical development (slavery of Black people; loss of land to Native Americans; and economic subjugation of Hispanos in the Southwest; unfair taxation, exploitation and discrimination against Asian labor, etc.)? | YES | NO | NA |
| F. | Does the material avoid representing the rights, goals and needs of one group of people as less worthy than those of another group in the United State history?   | YES | NO | NA |

## 8. CHECKLIST FOR RELIGIOUS BIAS

### 8.1 Bias

- |    |   |     |    |    |
|----|---|-----|----|----|
| A. | Does the material avoid debasing one religion as opposed to another?                              | YES | NO | NA |
| B. | Does the material avoid proselytizing for a religion or sect?                                     | YES | NO | NA |
| C. | Does the material avoid slighting references to "primitive" religious beliefs or "superstitions"? | YES | NO | NA |
| D. | Are religious symbols, icons or rituals not discussed in a derogatory or demeaning manner?        | YES | NO | NA |



2 Content Relevance

- |    |  |     |    |    |
|----|--|-----|----|----|
| A. | Does the material reflect and encourage equal respect for all religious views? | YES | NO | NA |
| B. | Does the material explore the common elements found in various religions?      | YES | NO | NA |

## CHECKLIST FOR SEXUAL BIAS

1 Bias

- |    |  |     |    |    |
|----|--|-----|----|----|
| A. | Does the material avoid debasing one sex as opposed to the other?  | YES | NO | NA |
| B. | Does the material avoid showings females only as background figures in a male-centered story?  | YES | NO | NA |
| C. | If females are central figures are they shown in roles other than the stereotype of teacher, mother, nurse, and/or secretary?  | YES | NO | NA |
| D. | Are the actions of women as sophisticated and as interesting as those of men? (Are women shown using initiative and imagination rather than being docile and passive?) | YES | NO | NA |
| E. | Are the values of beauty, sweetness, domesticity, motherhood and marriage avoided as depictions of the predominant virtues for females in the stories?                 | YES | NO | NA |
| F. | Are male figures shown as experiencing themselves as worthwhile only because they shoulder a female's burden or solve her problems avoided?                            | YES | NO | NA |

2 Content Relevance

- |    |   |     |    |    |
|----|---|-----|----|----|
| A. | Does the material reflect the conditions and contributions of women in United States society?   | YES | NO | NA |
| B. | Does the material encourage both boys and girls, and men and women to see themselves as human beings with an equal right to all benefits and choices provided by society? | YES | NO | NA |
| C. | Does the material present an objective account of women's struggle - both historically and contemporarily - to achieve equality with men?                                 | YES | NO | NA |
| D. | Does the material encourage girls to see themselves as capable of filling any role in society?  | YES | NO | NA |
| E. | Does the material present an accurate picture of women in other cultures, including their contributions to the culture and their struggles for equality within it?        | YES | NO | NA |

- |   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| A. Does the material avoid debasing one social group as opposed to another?   | YES | NO | NA |
| B. Does the material avoid showing only the nuclear family with middle class values as a worthwhile model for family structure? | YES | NO | NA |
| C. Do the material's illustrations avoid depicting food and dress that are common only to middle class families?                | YES | NO | NA |
| D. Does the material avoid depicting persons of certain cultural groups as being poor without any explanation for the fact?     | YES | NO | NA |

The following sources were used in compiling the above criteria:

Materials from:

The Lau Assistants Center, California

The State Department of Education, California

The Far West Laboratory, California

Issues of Sex Bias and Sex Fairness in Career Interest Measurements,  
H.E.W., National Institute of Education, 1975.